

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 SSO-00 NSCE-00 SY-05 A-01 USSS-00

OPR-02 OC-05 CCO-00 USIE-00 NEAE-00 INRE-00 OPIC-03

SIL-01 LAB-04 DODE-00 PRS-01 COME-00 SAM-01 SSM-03

EUR-12 L-03 SP-02 AID-05 NSC-05 CIEP-01 SS-15 STR-04

OMB-01 CEA-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 /100 W

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O R 011430Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

INFO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

SECSTATE WASHDC 6511

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1154

FOR SECRETARY SIMON FROM AMBASSADOR MURPHY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (SIMON, WILLIAM)

SUBJECT: SECRETARY SIMON'S DAMASCUS VISIT

1. MY STAFF AND I ARE GREATLY LOOKING FORWARD TO
YOUR WEDNESDAY ARRIVAL AND WILL DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE
TO MAKE YOUR BRIEF STAY IN DAMASCUS A SUCCESSFUL ONE.

2. I WANT TO ALERT YOU THAT IN YOUR PRINCIPAL MEETINGS
BOTH PRESIDENT ASAD AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC
AFFAIRS HAYDAR WILL BE SPEAKING TO YOU THROUGH AN
INTERPRETER. (ALTHOUGH THE PRESIDENT WILL PROBABLY
SAY A FEW WORDS OF GREETING IN ENGLISH AND FOLLOW
DIRECTLY A FAIR AMOUNT OF WHAT YOU WILL SAY, HE RARELY
PERMITS HIMSELF TO SPEAK MORE THAN A FEW SENTENCES OF
ENGLISH.) THE PRESIDENT'S INTERPRETER, ASAD ELIAS, IS
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HIGHLY ACCURATE BUT SLOW. HE WILL WRITE DOWN EACH WORD

YOU AND THE PRESIDENT SAY BEFORE TRANSLATING YOUR REMARKS.
THERE IS REGRETABLY NO SHORT CUT TO HIS PROCEDURE.

3. I HAVE FURNISHED BOTH THE PRESIDENT AND HAYDAR A BRIEF UPDATED REVIEW OF OUR CURRENT ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR SYRIA ABOUT WHICH YOU WILL HAVE BEEN BRIEFED BY WASHINGTON. I DOUBT THAT EITHER WILL DWELL ON THIS SUBJECT WITH YOU, ALTHOUGH HAYDAR MAY, IN JOCULAR VEIN, COMMENT THAT THEY WOULD WELCOME AND BE ABLE TO USE A PROGRAM 10 TIMES AS LARGE.

4. DURING THE PAST 27 MONTHS OF FORMAL SYRO-AMERICAN CONTACTS, BEGINNING WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER'S FIRST VISIT IN DECEMBER 1973, OUR EXCHANGES WITH THE SYRIAN LEADERSHIP HAVE LARGELY FOCUSED ON QUESTIONS DIRECTLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS. THE SYRIANS ARE KEENLY AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE TO THIS PROCESS OF OUR POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL AND HAVE BEEN CORRESPONDINGLY EAGER TO EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH AMERICAN OFFICIALS ABOUT OUR MIDDLE EAST POLICY. WITH RARE EXCEPTIONS THIS LEADERSHIP HAS OTHERWISE A LIMITED KNOWLEDGE OF AMERICA, BE IT OF THE WORKINGS OF OUR DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROCESS OR THE NATURE OF THE AMERICAN ECONOMY.

5. THEY SPEAK OF THEIR INTENTION TO MAINTAIN A VITAL PRIVATE SECTOR IN SYRIA BUT THAT SECTOR HAS LONG SINCE BEEN RELEGATED TO A MINOR ROLE RELATIVE TO THE PUBLIC SECTOR GOVERNED BY A HOST OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. SUPPORT FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR'S DOMINANCE IS A MATTER OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE WITH THE RULING BAATH PARTY. (ONE OF THE MANY ACCUSATIONS IN FACT THEY ARE MAKING OF SADAT THESE DAYS IS THAT HE IS CONSPIRING TO BRING BACK DISCREDITED EGYPTIAN CAPITALISTS AND DESTROY NASSER'S STRUCTURE OF "ARAB SOCIALISM.")

6. AT THE SAME TIME THE SYRIANS ARE A PRAGMATIC LOT AND ANXIOUS TO BENEFIT FROM OUR TECHNOLOGY. THEY HAVE WARMLY RECEIVED OUR AID OFFICIALS AND OUR PRIVATE BUSINESSMEN DESPITE THE FACT THAT YEARS OF WORKING WITH SOVIET AND EASTERN EUROPEAN DELEGATIONS ON TRADE ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS HAVE CONFIDENTIAL

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UNQUESTIONABLY LIMITED THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW OUR ECONOMY WORKS. THIS HAS TENDED TO SLOW DOWN MOVEMENT TOWARDS THE CLOSER COOPERATION WHICH WE ARE BOTH SEEKING TO CREATE. I MENTION THIS ONLY TO ALERT YOU TO THE OPPORTUNITY YOU WILL HAVE, AND TO THE ADVANTAGES I BELIEVE IT WOULD BRING, WERE YOU TO FIND AN OPENING TO EMPHASIZE OUR INTEREST IN CLOSER ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH THIS COUNTRY, WHOSE ECONOMY RESTS ON A STRONG AGRICULTURAL FOUNDATION, WHICH IS TRYING TO MECHANIZE

ITS AGRICULTURE AND GENERALLY TO INDUSTRIALIZE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

7. YOU WILL FIND THE PRESIDENT INTERESTED IN ANY COMMENTS YOU MAY WISH TO MAKE ABOUT THE CURRENT STATE OF THE AMERICAN ECONOMY.

8. THERE IS ONLY ONE TOPIC I WOULD ADVISE AGAINST YOUR RAISING DURING YOUR TALKS HERE: ANY SUGGESTION OF A US ROLE IN ENCOURAGING THE OIL-RICH ARAB STATES TO CONTRIBUTE TO SYRIA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. WITH THE BEST OF INTENTIONS WE HAD A MISUNDERSTANDING WITH THE SYRIAN LEADERSHIP LAST YEAR ON THIS ISSUE. AT THAT TIME THEY MADE IT AMPLY PLAIN THAT SECURING ARAB RPT ARAB ASSISTANCE FOR THEIR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS A SUBJECT WHICH LIES SOLELY WITHIN SYRIA'S COMPETENCE TO EXPLORE AND IN WHICH WE HAVE NO ROLE TO PLAY.

MURPHY

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